



KASHMIR'S CONTACT WITH CENTRAL ASIA DURING MUGHAL PERIOD (1586-1753.A.D)

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ABSTRACT

The Mughal occupation of Kashmir on 1586, opened new ways of developments. Immediately after its annexation it was merged with Subha Kabul of Mughals. A new type of administration was introduced comprised of subedars, diwans, qazis etc. With the end of political isolation the valley was thrown open to rest of the world, which in turn developed the economy of people. Road communications resulted in multiple of changes. Complete freedom and liberal patronage was provided by rulers to skilled workers for the development of industries. The two progressive industries of the time were Shawl and Silk weaving. Newer designs in the art and architecture were introduced for the first time in valley. Plantation of Chinars was boosted by them. Gardens with attractive terraces were built at different places. The people from far off areas were attracted to valley to see the beautiful tourist spots. Contacts with other areas resulted in cultural changes. Forced labour was abolished and people began to work with interest. All people were satisfied with the new governing class. Different castes of Central Asian origin got settled in valley.

KEYWORDS: Economy, Education, Development, New art, Contacts, Industry etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Kashmir's contact with Central Asia date back to remote past and cover several aspect of human relationship; social, economic, historical, cultural, and intellectual. These contacts developed over the years due to the frequent movement of men, material and thought between the two regions. Notwithstanding geographical hazards, dynastic upheavals, political convulsions, vagaries of nature, limited means of communication and transport etc., such contacts thrived uninterruptedly to the great benefit of the humans across the borders. Being multifaceted, these contacts were varied in nature, time and space.¹

A variety of transmission channels sustained such contacts and in that the role of a network of branch routes of the Grand silk route, few criss-crossing the valley, can not be underestimated. Incidentally, Kashmir was the junction, where all the ancient trade routes converged; one of them was Barmulla/Gandhara route which was traversed by many missionaries and travelers like Hieun-Tsang and Fahien. Similarly the route via Baltistan, Gilgit and Chitral was no less important. The route across Zojila to Leh and then onwards to Lhasa and Yarkand was functional till recent past². The historical travel accounts of Hieun-Tsang, Kalhana, Marco Polo, Sayyid Ali, Mirza Haider Dughlat, Haider Malik Chadoora, Narian Koul Aajiz, Muhammad Azam, Saadullah Shahabadi, Nath Pandit, Diwan Kripa Ram, Gh. Nabi Khanyari, Hassan Shah Khoihami and foreign travelers like, Father Xavier, George Forester, H.G. Bellew, Moorcoft, E.F. Knight and Yonghusband etc., provide a good deal of information on the topography and usefulness of these routes from early times. It was along these routes that Kashmir came in the network of great Mughals and became part of Kabul Subha.

With the Mughal occupation of Kashmir in October 14th 1586³, the traditional links connecting Kashmir with Central Asia across the Karakoram in the east and the Pamirs in the west were kept intact. Together with these new routes along the Pir Panjal range were established to directly link Kashmir with the Punjab, Lahore, Kabul⁴ and Central Asia. With this, local ruling aristocracy was eliminated and their place was taken over by the Iranis, Turains, Khwarizmians who significantly contributed to Mughal nobility and army in Kashmir. During this period, the ruling elite comprising the subedars, naib-subedars, diwans, qazis, and etc. was mainly formed of the people of Central Asian descent. Though they constituted a reference group, they certainly left considerable bearing on Kashmir society; its polity, art, architecture, language, dress, diet, customs, traditions, etc. It is true that the said rule registered a little bit of wastage and drain of resources from Kashmir. But at the same time, it made significant contribution to Kashmir economy especially its textiles; Shawl⁵ and Silk weaving⁶ for the promotion of which, keeping other considerations apart, roads and rest houses⁷ were constructed on the way to India, Lahore and Central Asian⁸ countries which had great economic consequences. The raw material for these textiles continued to be obtained from Central Asian neighborhood. Shawl-wool, an item of considerable economic and commercial advantages to Kashmir, was imported from Ladakh and Tibet. So were cocoons for Silk weaving imported from Khotan and the Chinese Turkistan. However, both these commodities were exported to the principle cities of Northern India, Tataristan, Persia, Turkey and Central Asia. The material traditionally used for Kashmir Shawls was fleece derived from a Central Asian sport mountain goat (Capra hircus). Mostly all the material for Kashmiri Shawls was imported from Tibet or Central Asia and was not produced

locally at that time. The fleece reaching Kashmir belonged to one of two distant grades. The best renowned and silkiness and warmth was known as "Asli Tus" and it was from this material that the most popular Shawl of Mughal fame was manufactured. However most of the material for Kashmiri Shawls came from Ladakh and western Tibet. However due to epidemics among goats in these areas, supply was derived from herds kept by nomadic Kirghiz tribes and imported through Yarkand and Khotan. During the time of Mughals several types of finished Shawls⁹ were manufactured, "Jamawar" was the best and finest in quality and make. Emperor Akbar called it by the name of "Parm-Narm". Like Shawl cloth; the silken textiles occupied a coveted place in the nobility in and outside Mughal India. Akbar, 1555-1605 A.D, was very fond of Shawls and took pains in improving this industry and during his reign Shawls became very popular. The Ain-i-Akbari records how Akbar improved the department of shawls and almost two thousand Shawl industries were functional in valley of Kashmir during the time of Akbar. The price of Shawl ranged between rupees two hundred to twelve hundred each in those days. Several types of Shawls of finished nature were then manufactured by Kashmiri Shawl workers. There seems to have been more excellency in the art with his positive support to artisans. He has realized the importance of Shawl work and its benefits to the local artisans as well as to government. The Shawl work can develop further contacts of valley to other parts of world.

From the very beginning of Akbars time Kashmiri Shawl became the coveted article of Mughal luxury and accordingly became the valuable item of royal harem. The Shawl industries progressed too much during his time, because of the liberal patronage that was received by the workers. Later Mughal rulers like, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were all extremely fond of Shawls and patronized the Shawl industry. They provided some sort of subsidy on Shawl weaving. As quoted by Bernier the Shawl industry will very soon change the economic status of people in valley of Kashmir. During Mughal period Shawl became the fashion of the day. In the days of Mughal emperors the art of Shawl weaving attained to such excellence that a Shawl of one and a half square yards could be twisted and passed through an ordinary finger ring. It is available today and is known as the "Ring Shawl of Kashmir"¹⁰. Thus during the Mughal rule not only contacts of Kashmir with Central Asia sustained uninterruptedly but many industries especially Shawl and Silk weaving developed considerably.

The increasing demand also resulted in more production this shows the sign of mastery over the art. Because of more earnings the art became too much popular in valley. People from rural areas began to migrate to urban areas especially in the city of Srinagar. With the passage of time the art flourished towards the other areas of valley. People willingly opted the new profession from there inner recesses of their heart. Side by side with the development of Shawl industry the Silk industry also progressed too much under the proper care of Mughal rulers. The industry was usually one of the principle source of revenue to the Mughals and obviously got developed to a greater extent. Silk industry was boosted in Kashmir because of abundance of mulberry trees, suitable elevation and favourable climate. According to standard sources of Mughal period like, Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl and Tuzak-i-Jahangiri of Jahangir the Silk work increased the new avenues of income to Mughals. The work that was initiated by initiated by Mughals ultimately bore its results under Dogras. In the beginning of twentieth century it began to replace the Shawl industry. Today it is the most reputed gov-

ernment controlled industry and means of livelihood of many people belonging to valley and about four thousand workers were employed in the industry. Nowadays called as Silk factory at Srinagar is the largest industry of its kind in valley. No other industry is endowed with such facilities as the Silk factory of Srinagar Kashmir.

The conspicuous contribution by the Mughals to the architectural wealth of Kashmir lies in large number of buildings, forts and gardens. The Mughal style as represented by buildings in Kashmir is practically the same as that of the buildings at the Delhi and Agra, with the little difference that marble has not been employed in Kashmir buildings on account of difficulties of transport. The earliest Mughal building in Srinagar is the outer wall round the Hariparbat fort which was built by Akbar in, 1596, A. D.¹¹ The lower part of the fort known as Nagar Nagar. For the construction of the fort Akbar has to import large number of masons from outside. The art of masonry in valley seems to have been died long before the decline of Hindu rule in fourteenth century. For its construction the forced labour was abolished by Akbar and people began to work with interest. Even some Kashmiri stone workers learnt the art of making new designs. Later on the fort was repaired by Afghan governor Atta Mohammad Khan, 1807-13 A.D. During the period frequent contacts also developed and newer designs in the art were introduced by the Mughals to boost the economy of Kashmir through construction and plantation of gardens at different places of valley.

Jahangir, 1605-1627 A.D, built the popular Shalimar garden in, 1620, A. D, and laid out large baradari¹² in it a new design probably unknown before its completion. The summer house of Jahangir at Verinag garden is now a heap of ruin. The baradari at Achabal¹³ is still in existence. The "Garam hamam" bath of Jahangir in Achabal garden is still in existence. This was introduced by Mirza Haider Dughlat in Kashmir¹⁴. The Mughal emperor Jahangir extended the plantation of Chinars¹⁵ and planned systematically the Char-Chinari (four Chinars) in Dal lake Srinagar.

The Pather Masjid or Shahi Masjid built by Nur Jahan in, 1622. A. D, presents a peculiar feature of Mughal stone architecture. The pluits of Masjid is surmounted by a lotus leaf coping Masjid having nine arches including the huge central arched portico. As quoted by G. M. D. Sofi "the arched openings are enclosed in shallow decorative cusped arches which in their turn are enclosed in rectangular frames. The horizontal construction of these arches is un-paralled. The half attached bed post columns in the two outer angles of the jambs of the entrance are noteworthy. Really its construction has opened the new fields and challenges for local artisans and as compared to other wooden Mosques the architecture of Pather Masjid has remained un-matched. After the death of Jahangir some constructions of Shahjahan become very famous throughout India. He is also known as the king of architecture.

Shahjahan, 1627-1658 A.D, built a pavilion in Chashmai- Shahi garden. This garden was laid out by Ali Mardan Khan in, 1632, A D, emerging from the slopes of the Zabarwan hill. The waters of spring are known for their cool and rejuvenating qualities. The garden is arranged on three ascending terraces. The total area of the rectangular garden is approximately, 1.73 acres with a width of, 70.83 meters and length of, 122.8 meters. The distinguishing feature of this garden is its very high terraces and its gateway of Mughal character. Nishat garden by Asif Khan in 1634, A. D. Achabal garden by Jahan- Ara daughter of Shahjahan in, 1640, A. D. Besides these remarkable architectural designs there were some other popularities of Shahjahans time constructed by his son Dara Shuokh.

Dara Shuokh was not only a remarkable writer but equally was the well wisher of the people. Dara built the big garden of Chinars at Bijbehara Anantnag in, 1646, A.D, popularly known by the name of BadShahi Bagh at Bijbehara. Chinar leaves have played an important role in arts and crafts of valley of Kashmir. In paper Machie and Walnut works the painting of Chinars are beautifully decorated. In all parts of valley of Kashmir our Shrines, Temples, Tirthas and Churches are decorated by planting these trees. It is a sacred act and at present the number of Chinar trees in valley is approximately more than forty thousand. Efforts should be taken to preserve the traditional Chinar trees otherwise within a short period of time the same will disappear. The Mughal rulers beautified not only the gardens but also the valley as well.

The Mosque of Mulla Shah and the intellectual School of Sufis were constructed by Prince Dara Shuokh for his religious tutor Mulla Shah Badakhshani to develop the educational system of valley. The Mosque was constructed in, 1649 A.D, and is situated a little away up the hill of Kohi Maran below the Shrine of Makhdum Sahib. Being the first Mosque of its kind which was having the attached library and Garam Hamama for winters. It is built of beautiful grey lime stone. The stone lotus finial over the pulpit is the only example of its kind surviving in valley of Kashmir. The external decorations are the rectangular panels enclosing cusped arches. At the end of, 1660, A.D, Mulla Shah abandoned all and moved to Lahore and left the world in 1660, A.D, and lies buried near the tomb of Miyan Mir Lahori.

The School of Sufis was constructed by Prince Dara Shuokh under the spiritual instructions of his religious master at Pari Mahal in Srinagar near Chasma Shahi garden on the slopes of Zabarwan Mountain in, 1650 A.D. It was built at the site of a Buddhist monastery. Dara Shuokh named it after his wife Nadira Begum, sup-

posed to be known by the name of Pari Begum. The School was the first of its kind in valley where besides religious education the knowledge other subjects was equally imparted to seekers free of cost. Side by side with religious education the knowledge of other branches like, astronomy, mathematics and science was equally imparted to the people. The learners were provided free food and other basic necessities. The most distinguished contribution of the School was that more and more stress was laid on the education of women. That it is obligatory upon husband to impart religious education to his wife and if he does not fulfill it, the woman has every right to move towards a teacher without the permission of her husband. As a result of these teachings the women education received great boost and impetus in the valley. Based on such teachings the school attracted the people at large to receive the education irrespective of faith. With the result the concept of unity developed among the people that resulted in the development of educational values within the society.

The Shrine of Hazratbal was constructed by Shahjahan on the banks of Dal lake on the site of early Mughal garden known as Sadiq - Abad. The sanctity of Hazratbal Shrine is the Holy relic of last Prophet Mohammad (SAW) brought to valley by a rich Kashmiri merchant namely Khawaja Nuru'd-din Ishabari. The Prophetic hair (Mui-Mubarak) was brought to Bijapur by Syed Abdullah from Medina Arab in 1699, A.D, during the reign of Aurangzeb, 1658-1707 A.D, and the same was purchased by the Kashmiri Nuru'd-din Ishabari against the amount of one lakh rupees and exhibited it in the Shrine of Hazratbal to keep alive the religious sentiments of people. At present the place is the source of inspiration for every Kashmiri. The ruling section is having the great regard for the sacred place. The maintenance and other necessary things related to it are made easily available by them.

Kashmir was prosperous in mineral resources and fruits which got impetus in trade and made economy prosperous one. The Mughals if not built new canals, but they seem to have repaired the old ones. Their love for gardens and springs resulted incidentally in increasing the irrigation facilities for the cultivators.¹⁶ The Mughal rulers paid visits to valley which led to foundation of some cities and towns particularly by Akber, Jahanjir and Shahjahan¹⁷. The period showed a drastic change in economic development, because the valley was thrown open not only to India but also to rest of the world which helped in developing trade relations with foreign countries. New cities and towns came into being as celebrated urban centers with hectic and brisk trade and scholarly activity. In the train of these including contacts, Kashmiri society noticed a great deal of Central Asian influence on society, polity, economy, art, architecture, diet, dress, housing, customs, traditions, beliefs, taboos, etc. During the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan large number of famous poets came to Kashmir like Kalim of (Hamdan), Qudusi of (Mashad), Tughra of (Mashad), Mir Illahi of (Assad near Hamdan), and Fasihi of (Heerat). Their verses were often quoted by lexicographers. Some of the poets were having the Persian origin; but they loved Kashmir more than their own native land and they settled in the valley permanently. The presence of so many men of culture and learning contributed to the intellectual attainments of this country in literature and bells letters. Not surprising, therefore, to see a new brand of castes from across the Kashmir borders contributing to the social status of the valley. Infact, there are some particular areas which are known after the name of the Mughals in Kashmir, who on entering the valley, dispersed in different directions and settled in several cities, towns and villages. In the process, the emigrants radiated and absorbed mutual influence as a pre-condition for adaptation and settlement in the alien conditions¹⁸.

CONCLUSION:

Occupation of Kashmir by Mughals has really resulted in number of changes. With the end of political isolation the valley was thrown open to rest of the world, which developed trade and cultural relations with the foreign countries which had great economic consequences. With the result their was all-round change in the society.

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9. According to M.Dauvergne the history of Kashmiri Shawls dates back to the

times of emperor Babur. The Mughal emperors wore on their turbans a jeweled ornament known as Jigha. Many Andijani weavers were brought into India and Kashmir by the Mughal emperors, because they were the trained masters of the Jigha design. The Jigha design is still prevalent both in Kashmir and Persia. This design was introduced during the time of Mughals both in Kashmir as well as in India.

10. Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, P.376.
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12. Baradari having twelve doors is ordinarily a square or rectangular pavilion with three doorways on each of its four sides. It is generally a summer house in garden.
13. Achabal is almost 10 Kms. from Anantnag town.
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